



# English Department Newsletter



U N I V E R S I T Y O F S O U T H E R N M A I N E

## Department Honors Part-Time Faculty

**Virginia “Ginny” Weaver**, a dedicated writing instructor at USM, has retired after 30 years of teaching.



Ginny frequently met with her writing and literature students in Gorham and Portland outside of her regular office hours to accommodate their academic and work schedules. Colleagues in neighboring offices could hear her voice coming from the writing carrels outside the office door patiently explaining organizational and syntactical problems to students whom she encouraged to write and rewrite assigned papers.

Ginny transferred to her students the virtue of patience. But Ginny was no pushover. She ignored the triteness of the excuses and focused on students' potential, even if the assignment was turned in belatedly.

Ginny was a wonderful resource to new colleagues. Her friendliness, enthusiasm, and passion for teaching will be missed by us all. The Weaver family has contributed to a Dean's Fellowship for newly admitted students in the English Major. We thank Ginny and we wish her well.

**Rick Dennison** retired from USM after 32 years of teaching. When compiling statements to share about the quality of Rick's teaching and how much he affected his students, we were overwhelmed with the positive responses. In fact, we could have written a book about how much the students appreciated him and enjoyed his courses. He was described as “enthusiastic,” “very friendly,” “smart and helpful,” “knowledgeable, understanding, and fair,” “approachable,” “fun,” “insightful.” Every evaluation gave only praise: “I enjoyed the instructor, and he showed a real love for the subject;” “an amazing teacher. He is always organized and prepared;” “he was also a nice guy and encouraged us to ask questions.” In short, he was a “great teacher.” Thanks, Rick!



## A n E n g l i s h G a t h e r i n g

On April 4th the department hosted a social event for students, staff, and faculty. USM alumna Morgan Callan Rogers read from her book, *Red Ruby Heart in a Cold Blue Sea*, and English part-time faculty member Jaed Coffin read from his first novel, *A Chant to Sooth Wild Elephants*. We then honored our two retiring faculty, Ginny Weaver and Rick Dennison. Dean of CAHS Lynn Kuzma expressed gratitude for the work of our English Professors, and President Selma Botman presented Professor Weaver with a gift.



President Botman presents  
Ginny Weaver with gift



Coffin reads from his novel



Coffin and Rogers pose with their novels

## Meet English Faculty

### Jane Kuenz



When asked about the bullet-riddled shooting target that greets students entering her Luther Bonney office, Professor Jane Kuenz jokes, “I feel it puts them in the proper mood.” The target is a souvenir from her second research trip to Las Vegas, where she hung out in casinos and explored the Strip’s other tourist attractions, including “The Gun Store,” for her book on Sin City, co-written with colleagues from Duke University and UC-Davis. Kuenz’s chapters focus on surveillance technologies in cultural forms and everyday spaces and social practices, particularly those linked to entertainment and consumption. “I’ve made three trips for this project,” she says, “one to learn my way around, one to look at cameras, and one to gamble.” Chosen by her co-writers to write the gambling chapter, she learned craps and roulette in an afternoon from a former dealer now living in Maine before she set out on a 4-day gambling blitz. On an earlier trip she was interrogated by the Luxor’s house detectives who were suspicious of her interest in casino security.



Professor Kuenz is working on a new project funded by a Faculty Senate Research Grant that examines reality TV, Facebook, and other social media, the popular BODIES exhibitions of plastinated corpses, and Suzanne Collins’ bestselling *Hunger Games* trilogy.



### Bud McGrath

Over the past two decades Professor McGrath’s research and writing have focused on Irish literature, particularly as it relates to Irish history, politics, and culture from a postcolonial perspective. Irish playwright Brian Friel and a group of writers associated with the Field Day Theatre Company he founded have provided a focus for McGrath’s broad examination of Irish literary culture during the 1980s and early 1990s. Professor McGrath’s book *Brian Friel: (Post)Colonial Drama: Language, Illusion, and Politics* (Syracuse UP, 1999) evaluated Friel’s work from a postcolonial perspective. Professor McGrath’s chapter in Blackwell’s *A Companion to Irish Literature* (2010) - “Brian Friel: From Nationalism to Postnationalism”-- assesses Friel’s whole career and discusses his new plays and new scholarship. Currently McGrath is finishing a comprehensive assessment of the plays, pamphlets, books, and anthologies produced by Ireland’s Field Day Theatre Company, an output that contributed substantially to cultural and political debates in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s.



Professor McGrath recently delivered a paper in New Orleans at the annual convention of the American Conference for Irish Studies --“Remapping Anglo-Irish Relations: Triangulation of Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nationality in *The Crying Game*”--which moved him into new research territory, Irish film, which he has been using in his courses more and more over the past several years. For the past two years he has served as coordinator for the new general education cluster on Film and Society, a cluster that is sufficiently robust to provide the foundation for a future interdisciplinary major in film.

In 2010 he developed an online version of Irish Drama, which he has taught for the past two summers. This year he will develop an online version of ENG 245, which will become part of the new online interdisciplinary major in the Humanities and, hopefully, part of a blended online version of the English major.



## Scholarship Winners

**Madalyn Rose Terry** I have always been impressed by writers whose words can invoke introspection and resonate into posterity. In high school, I naively only grouped poets into this category of writers. However, since my acceptance into the USM English program, my professors have exposed me to a wide variety of rhetorical and creative works that have not only challenged me to think more critically as a reader, but have also caused me to recognize the beauty and complexity of this multifaceted major. I am grateful to be a part of the USM community, and I appreciate all of the professors who have helped me narrow my focus as a student by inspiring me to become a teacher. I am eagerly awaiting to continue the English program, and by receiving the Jandebeaur Scholarship, I have been given the opportunity to continue to pursue my goals here at USM. **Jandebeaur Scholarship 2012**



**Michael Frier** There's something special about the USM student. It isn't their intelligence or GPA, their honesty or even their good looks. It's the fact that each and every student has a story. They work two jobs; they have families to support. It is an honor that my story has been recognized. The C. Elizabeth Sawyer Scholarship Foundation and the University have my gratitude because not only did they acknowledge the work I have been doing, but they have also encouraged and invested in my future. The funds from the scholarship have allowed me to make adjustments in my life so that I can comfortably pursue my goals as a student and, ultimately, as a professional. **Elizabeth Sawyer Scholarship 2012**



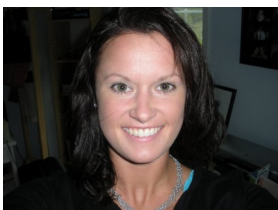
**Alicia Fisher** My time at USM has seen the publication of my first collection of poems, a scholarship to Stonecoast, and now the Treworgy Scholarship. Over the past few years I have seen my scholarly pursuits morph in delightful ways. I owe much of my new foundation to the care and guidance of tirelessly supportive and challenging professors. I have become acquainted with my own grit. I plan to take this grit into the community, exploring the emboldening power of poetry with those who are incarcerated or otherwise disadvantaged. The literacy program at USM has greatly enhanced my desire to teach and learn from populations who are quite often forgotten. The Treworgy Scholarship will help me in furthering my goal. **Treworgy Scholarship 2012**

Alicia Fisher's book of poems, *Tenants*, was recently published by Finishing Line Press (2012).



**Philip Shelley** has been awarded the **Rick Carboneau Scholarship** to attend the Stonecoast Writers' Conference this summer.

## Alumni News



**Erinn Ridge** Being in the English major at USM plays a significant role in how I approach my graduate studies today. The English program focused on the ability to analyze theory, and often to apply it to current events. In transitioning from the English major to a graduate program in Mental Health Counseling at Lesley University, I have used this extensive training to analyze theoretical situations about a client's mental well-being. Although a unique transition, it has been an important one for me, and I believe the faculty in the English Department prepared me through their hard work and dedication.

**Benjamin Rybeck** is currently enrolled in the MFA program at the University of Arizona, where he teaches creative writing and composition, and is the editor-in-chief of *Sonora Review*. He is beginning to place his stories in small literary journals, both in print and online. Recently, he paid his bills with a \$1,000 prize he won for his writing. At USM, he ran *Words & Images* and the English Students' Association, and participated in the Stonecoast Writers' Conference, thus finding real-life experience in the realms of publishing, organization, and teaching.



**Gerard Bianco** recently published *Discipline: A Play*. Chris Kompanek from the *Huffington Post* called it "Compelling," and Paige Lovitt, a reviewer for *Reader's Views* said, "*Discipline* truly made me laugh out loud. It's hysterical."

## O'Brien Poetry Event

The Department of English hosted the annual O'Brien Poetry Event on November 4th, 2011. This year's poet was Brigit Pegeen Kelly, one of America's strikingly original contemporary poets. Professor Kelly has received some of American poetry's most prestigious honors, including a Discover/the Nation Award, the Yale Younger Poets Prize, a Whiting Writers Award, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Academy of American Poets. She has taught at various colleges and universities, including the University of California-Irvine, Purdue University, and Warren Wilson College, and at writers' conferences in the United States and Ireland. She is currently a Professor of English at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.



**Congratulations to Caroline O'Connor Thomas!** She is a work-study student in the department and an English major who will graduate this semester; she also worked as Publishing Director for *Words & Images*. Caroline will be pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at St. Mary's College, Moraga, California.

## Faculty Publication and News

**Dianne Benedict** taught in the Champlain College Young Writer's Conference in Burlington, Vermont in April.

**Lucinda Cole** recently finished an article "Human, Animal, and Machine in the Seventeenth Century"; it is co-authored with Robert Markley (University of Illinois) and will appear in the *Blackwell Companion to English Literature*. At the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Annual Conference in March, she delivered a paper, "The Dog, the Slut, and the Flea; Or How Parasites Ate My Binarie," on the Women's Caucus panel. Professor Cole is working with Robert Fiske of Maine Friends of Animals to create connections between the University Curriculum and community animal welfare programs.

**Ann Dean** traveled to St. Louis in March to present her ongoing research on how to support students taking first-year writing courses. The Writing Support Project is a multi-year study of how students use academic and social resources as they learn to write for college.

**Lisa Giles** is a committee member and was a panel chair for "Making Sense of the Personal: Auto/Biography" for the Spring Academic Conference titled: "Identity, Memory, Testimony," March 30-31, hosted by the Maine Women Writers Collection at UNE. Professor Giles will be assisting in the development of environment-focused linked courses next fall with CAHS Associate Dean Adam Tuchinsky and Assistant Professor of History Libby Bischof.

**Nancy Gish** gave the keynote address, "Eliot and Virgil in Love and War," at the conference on T.S. Eliot and the Heritage of Rome and Italy in Modernist Literature in Florence, Italy, in February 2012.

**Margaret Reimer** recently taught a Bridgton Sr College class on the movie *Casablanca* to an enthusiastic reception. Later in the spring she will be teaching a short course on the History of English. Professor Reimer recently acted as an adult adviser and chaperone for a Lake Region High School "30 Hour Famine"- a service learning project in which 15 high school juniors and seniors learned about hunger in developing countries and completed a public service project, including raising food for local food pantries and collecting monetary pledges to help combat hunger in Malawi. Professor Reimer adds, "The students stayed up all night and survived without meals for 30 hours. I'm not sure who was more exhausted- the kids or the chaperones."

**Shelton Waldrep's** new book, *The Dissolution of Place: Architecture, Identity, and the Body* is in production at Ashgate Publishing, where it has been selected for the Ashgate Studies in Architecture Series. A portion of chapter four has just been published as "Bond's Body: *Diamonds are Forever* (1971), *Casino Royale* (2006), and the Future Anterior" in *World Cinema and the Visual Arts*, David Gallaher, ed. London: Anthem Press. Professor Waldrep's review of *Building Romanticism: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Britain* is forthcoming in *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*. He presented his paper "Death by Media Attention: Lady Gaga, David Bowie, and Queer Disability in Popular Music" at the 42nd Annual Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference in Boston in April. In addition to directing a dissertation for the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, he was the judge this year (along with English Professor Nancy Gish) for the 2011-2012 Betsy Scholl Award in Poetry for *Words and Images*.

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